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ART. IV. — *Frühlingsfluthen. Ein König Lear des Dorfes.*
Zwei Novellen. Von IWAN TURGÉNIEW. Mitau. 1873.

WE know of several excellent critics who to the question Who is the first novelist of the day? would reply, without hesitation, Iwan Turgéniew. Comparisons are odious, and we propose to make none that shall seem merely invidious. We quote our friends' verdict as a motive for this brief record of our own impressions. These, too, are in the highest degree favorable; and yet we wish, not to impose a conclusion, but to help well-disposed readers to a larger enjoyment. To many such Turgéniew is already vaguely known as an eminent Russian novelist. Twelve years ago he was little more than a name, even in France, where he perhaps now finds his most sympathetic readers. But all his tales, we believe without exception, have now been translated into French, — several by the author himself; an excellent German version of the best is being published under his own supervision, and several very fair English versions have appeared in England and America. He enjoys what is called a European reputation, and it is constantly spreading. The Russians, among whom fiction flourishes vigorously, consider him their greatest artist. His tales are not numerous, and many of them are very short. He gives one the impression of writing much more for love than for lucre. He is particularly a favorite with people of cultivated taste; and nothing, in our opinion, cultivates the taste more than to read him.

I. — He belongs to the limited class of very careful writers. It is to be admitted at the outset that he is a zealous genius, rather than an abundant one. His line is narrow observation. He has not the faculty of rapid, passionate, almost reckless improvisation, — that of Walter Scott, of Dickens, of George Sand. This is an immense charm in a story-teller; on the whole, to our sense, the greatest. Turgéniew lacks it; he charms us in other ways. To describe him in the fewest terms, he is a story-teller who has taken notes. This must have been a life-long habit. His tales are a magazine of small

facts, of anecdotes, of descriptive traits, taken, as the phrase is, *sur le vif*. If we are not mistaken, he notes down an idiosyncrasy of character, a fragment of talk, an attitude, a feature, a gesture, and keeps it, if need be, for twenty years, till just the moment for using it comes, just the spot for placing it. "Stachow spoke French tolerably, and as he led a quiet sort of life passed for a philosopher. Even as an ensign, he was fond of disputing warmly whether, for instance, a man in his life might visit every point of the globe, or whether he might learn what goes on at the bottom of the sea, and was always of the opinion that it was impossible." The writer of this description may sometimes be erratic, but he is never vague. He has a passion for distinctness, for bringing his characterization to a point, for giving you an example of his meaning. He often, indeed, strikes us as loving details for their own sake, as a bibliomaniac loves the books he never reads. His figures are all portraits; they have each something special, something peculiar, something that none of their neighbors have, and that rescues them from the limbo of the gracefully general. We remember, in one of his stories, a gentleman who makes a momentary appearance as host at a dinner-party, and after being described as having such and such a face, clothes, and manners, has our impression of his personality completed by the statement that the soup at his table was filled with little paste figures, representing hearts, triangles, and trumpets. In the author's conception, there is a secret affinity between the character of this worthy man and the contortions of his vermicelli. This habit of specializing people by vivid oddities was the gulf over which Dickens danced the tight-rope with such agility. But Dickens, as we say, was an improviser; the practice for him was a kind of lawless revel of the imagination. Turgéniew, on the other hand, always proceeds by book. What could be more minutely appreciative, and at the same time less like Dickens, than the following portrait?

"People in St. Petersburg still remember the Princess R——. She appeared there from time to time at the period of which we speak. Her husband was a well-bred mah, but rather stupid, and she had no children. The Princess used to start suddenly on long

journeys, and then return suddenly to Russia. Her conduct in all things was very strange. She was called light, and a coquette. She used to give herself up with ardor to all the pleasures of society : dance till she dropped with exhaustion, joke and laugh with the young men she received before dinner in her darkening drawing-room, and pass her nights praying and weeping, without finding a moment's rest. She often remained till morning in her room stretching her arms in anguish ; or else she remained bowed, pale and cold, over the leaves of a hymn-book. Day came, and she was transformed again into an elegant creature, paid visits, laughed, chattered, rushed to meet everything that could give her the smallest diversion. She was admirably shaped. Her hair, the color of gold, and as heavy as gold, formed a tress which fell below her knees. And yet she was not spoken of as a beauty ; she had nothing fine in her face except her eyes. This even, perhaps, is saying too much, for her eyes were gray and rather small ; but their deep keen gaze, careless to audacity, and dreamy to desolation, was equally enigmatical and charming. Something extraordinary was reflected in them, even when the most futile speeches were passing from her lips. Her toilets were always too striking."

These lines seem to carry a kind of historical weight. It is the Princess R——, and no one else. We feel as if the author could show us documents and relics ; as if he had her portrait, a dozen letters, some of her old trinkets. Or take the following few lines from the admirable tale called "The Wayside Inn" : "He belonged to the burgher class, and his name was Nahum Iwanow. He had a thick short body, broad shoulders, a big round head, long waving hair, already grizzled, though he was not yet forty. His face was full and fresh-colored ; his forehead low and white. His little eyes, of a clear blue, had a strange look, at once oblique and impudent. He kept his head always bent, his neck being too short ; he walked fast, and never let his hands swing, keeping them always closed. When he smiled, and he smiled often, but without laughing, and as if by stealth, his red lips parted disagreeably, showing a row of very white, very close teeth. He spoke quickly, with a snarling tone." When fiction is written in this fashion, we believe as we read. The same vividly definite element is found in the author's treatment of landscape : "The weather continued to stand at set-fair ; little rounded white clouds

moved through the air at a great height, and looked at themselves in the water ; the reeds were stirred by movements and murmurs produced by no wind ; the pond, looking in certain places like polished steel, absorbed the splendid sunshine." There is an even greater reality, because it is touched with the fantastic, without being perverted by it, in this brief sketch of the Pontine Marshes, from the beautiful little story of "Visions":—

"The cloud before my eyes divided itself. I became aware of a limitless plain beneath me. Already, from the warm soft air which fanned my cheeks, I had observed that I was no longer in Russia. This plain, moreover, was not like our Russian plains. It was an immense dusky level, overgrown, apparently, with no grass, and perfectly desolate. Here and there, over the whole expanse, glittered pools of standing water, like little fragments of looking-glass. In the distance, the silent, motionless sea was vaguely visible. In the intervals of the broad, beautiful clouds glittered great stars. A murmur, thousand-voiced, unceasing, and yet not loud, resounded from every spot ; and strangely rang this penetrating, drowsy murmur, this nightly voice of the desert. . . . 'The Pontine Marshes,' said Ellis. 'Do you hear the frogs? Do you recognize the smell of sulphur?'"

This is a cold manner, many readers will say, and certainly it has a cold side ; but when the character is one over which the author's imagination really kindles, it is an admirable vehicle for touching effects. Few stories leave on the mind a more richly poetic impression than "*Hélène*"; all the tenderness of our credulity goes forth to the heroine. Yet this exquisite image of idealized devotion swims before the author's vision in no misty moonlight of romance ; she is as solidly fair as a Greek statue ; his dominant desire has been to understand her, and he retails small facts about her appearance and habits with the impartiality of a judicial, or even a medical, summing up. The same may be said of his treatment of all his heroines, and said in evidence of the refinement of his art ; for if there are no heroines we see more distinctly, there are none we love more ardently. It would be difficult to point, in the blooming fields of fiction, to a group of young girls more radiant with maidenly charm than M. Turgéniew's *Hélène*, his *Lisa*, his

Katia, his Tatiana, and his Gemma. For the truth is that, taken as a whole, he regains on another side what he loses by his apparent want of joyous invention. If his manner is that of a searching realist, his temper is that of a devoutly attentive observer, and the result of this temper is to make him take a view of the great spectacle of human life more general, more impartial, more unreservedly intelligent, than that of any novelist we know. Even on this line he proceeds with his characteristic precision of method; one thinks of him as having divided his subject-matter into categories, and as moving from one to the other, — with none of the magniloquent pretensions of Balzac, indeed, to be the great showman of the human comedy, — but with a deeply intellectual impulse toward universal appreciation. He seems to us to care for more things in life, to be solicited on more sides, than any novelist save George Eliot. Walter Scott cares for adventure and bravery and honor and ballad figures, and the humor of Scotch peasants; Dickens cares, on an immense, far-reaching scale, for picturesqueness; George Sand cares for love and botany. But these writers care also, greatly, and indeed almost supremely, for their fable, for its twists and turns and surprises, for the work they have in hand of amusing the reader. Even George Eliot, who cares for so many other things beside, has a weakness for making a rounded plot, and often swells out her tales with mechanical episodes, in the midst of which their moral unity quite evaporates. The Bulstrode-Raffles episode in “*Middlemarch*,” and the whole fable of “*Felix Holt*,” are striking cases in point. M. Turgéniew lacks, as regards form, as we have said, this immense charm of absorbed inventiveness; but in the way of substance there is literally almost nothing he does not care for. Every class of society, every type of character, every degree of fortune, every phase of manners, passes through his hands; his imagination claims its property equally, in town and country, among rich and poor, among wise people and idiots, *dilettanti* and peasants, the tragic and the joyous, the probable and the grotesque. He has an eye for all our passions, and a deeply sympathetic sense of the wonderful complexity of our souls. He relates in “*Mumu*” the history of a deaf-and-dumb serf and

a lap-dog, and he portrays in "A Strange Story" an extraordinary case of religious fanaticism. He has a passion for shifting his point of view, but his object is constantly the same, — that of finding an incident, a person, a situation, *morally* interesting. This is his great merit, and the underlying harmony of the mosaic fashion in which he works. He believes in the intrinsic value of "subject" in art; he holds that there are trivial subjects and serious ones, that the latter are much the best, and that their superiority resides in their giving us absolutely a greater amount of information about the human mind. Deep into the mind he is always attempting to look, though he often applies his eye at very dusky apertures. There is perhaps no better evidence of his minutely psychological attitude than the considerable part played in his tales by simpletons and weak-minded persons. There are few novelists who have not been charmed by the quaintness and picturesqueness of mental invalids; but M. Turgéniew is attracted by something more, — by the opportunity of watching the machinery of character, as it were, through a broken window-pane. One might collect from his various tales a perfect regiment of incapables, of the stragglers on life's march. Almost always, in the background of his groups of well-to-do persons, there lurks some grotesque, underwitted poor relation, who seems to hover about as a vague memento, in his scheme, of the instability both of fortune and of human cleverness. Such, for instance, is Uwar Iwanowitsch, who figures as a kind of inarticulate chorus in the tragedy of "Hélène." He sits about, looking very wise and opening and closing his fingers, and in his person, in this attitude, the drama capriciously takes leave of us. Perhaps the most moving of all the author's tales — moving, not in the sense that it makes us shed easy tears, but as reminding us vividly of the solidarity, as we may say, of all human weakness — has for its hero a person made imbecile by suffering. The admirable little tale of "The Brigadier" can only be spoiled by an attempt to retail it; we warmly recommend it to the reader, in the French version. Never did Romance stoop over a lowlier case of moral decomposition, but never did she gather more of the perfume of human truth. To a person able to read but one of M. Turgéniew's tales, we should

perhaps offer this one as a supreme example of his peculiar power ; for here the artist, as well as the analyst, is at his best. All rigid critical formulas are more or less unjust, and it is not a complete description of our author — it would be a complete description of no real master of fiction — to say that he is simply a searching observer. M. Turgéniew's imagination is always lending a hand and doing work on its own account. Some of this work is exquisite ; nothing could have more of the simple magic of picturesqueness than such tales as "The Dog," "The Jew," "Visions," "The Adventure of Lieutenant Jergounow," "Three Meetings," a dozen episodes in the "Memoirs of a Sportsman." Imagination guides his hand and modulates his touch, and makes the artist worthy of the observer. In a word, he is universally sensitive. In susceptibility to the sensuous impressions of life, — to colors and odors and forms, and the myriad ineffable refinements and enticements of beauty, — he equals, and even surpasses, the most accomplished representatives of the French school of story-telling ; and yet he has, on the other hand, an apprehension of man's religious impulses, of the *ascetic* passion, the capacity of becoming dead to colors and odors and beauty, never dreamed of in the philosophy of Balzac and Flaubert, Octave Feuillet and Gustave Droz. He gives us Lisa in "A Nest of Noblemen," and Madame Polosow in "Spring-Torrents." This marks his range. Let us add, in conclusion, that his merit of form is of the first order. He is remarkable for concision ; few of his novels occupy the whole of a moderate volume, and some of his best performances are tales of thirty pages.

II. — M. Turgéniew's themes are all Russian ; here and there the scene of a tale is laid in another country, but the actors are genuine Muscovites. It is the Russian type of human nature that he depicts ; this perplexes, fascinates, inspires him. His works savor strongly of his native soil, like those of all great novelists, and give one who has read them all a strange sense of having had a prolonged experience of Russia. We seem to have travelled there in dreams, to have dwelt there in another state of being. M. Turgéniew gives us a peculiar sense

of being out of harmony with his native land, — of his having what one may call a poet's quarrel with it. He loves the old, and he is unable to see where the new is drifting. American readers will peculiarly appreciate this state of mind; if they had a native novelist of a large pattern, it would probably be, in a degree, his own. Our author *feels* the Russian character intensely, and cherishes, in fancy, all its old manifestations, — the unemancipated peasants, the ignorant, absolute, half-barbarous proprietors, the quaint provincial society, the local types and customs of every kind. But Russian society, like our own, is in process of formation, the Russian character is in solution, in a sea of change, and the modified, modernized Russian, with his old limitations and his new pretensions, is not, to an imagination fond of caressing the old fixed contours, an especially grateful phenomenon. A satirist at all points, as we shall have occasion to say, M. Turgéniew is particularly unsparing of the new intellectual fashions prevailing among his countrymen. The express purpose of one of his novels, "Fathers and Sons," is to contrast them with the old; and in most of his recent works, notably "Smoke," they have been embodied in various grotesque figures.

It was not, however, in satire, but in thoroughly genial, poetical portraiture, that our author first made his mark. "The Memoirs of a Sportsman" were published in 1852, and were considered, says one of the two French translators of the work, much the same sort of contribution to the question of Russian serfdom as Mrs. Stowe's famous novel to that of American slavery. This, perhaps, is forcing a point, for M. Turgéniew's group of tales strikes us much less as a passionate *pièce de circonstance* than as a disinterested work of art. But circumstances helped it, of course, and it made a great impression, — an impression which testifies to no small culture on the part of Russian readers. For never, surely, was a work with a polemic bearing more consistently low in tone, as painters say. The author treats us to such a scanty dose of flagrant horrors that the moral of the book is obvious only to attentive readers. No single episode pleads conclusively against the "peculiar institution" of Russia; the lesson is in the cumulative testimony of a multitude of fine touches, — in

an after-sense of sadness which sets wise readers thinking. It would be difficult to name a work which contains better instruction for those heated spirits who are fond of taking sides on the question of "art for art." It offers a capital example of moral meaning giving a sense to form, and form giving relief to moral meaning. Indeed, all the author's characteristic merits are to be found in the "Memoirs," with a certain amateurish looseness of texture which will charm many persons who find his later works too frugal, as it were, in shape. Of all his productions, this is indeed the most purely delightful. We especially recommend the little history of Foma, the forest keeper, who, one rainy night, when the narrator has taken refuge in his hut, hears a peasant stealing fagots in the dark, dripping woods, rushes forth and falls upon him, drags the poor wretch home, flings him into a corner, and sits on in the smoky hovel (with the author, whom we perceive there, noting, feeling, measuring it all), while the rain batters the roof, and the drenched starveling howls and whines and imprecates. Anything more dismally real in a narrower compass we have never read, — anything more pathetic, with less of the machinery of pathos. In this case, as at every turn with M. Turgéniew, "It is life itself," we murmur as we read, "and not this or that or the other story-teller's more or less clever 'arrangement' of life." M. Turgéniew deserves this praise in its largest application; for "life" in his pages is very far from meaning a dreary liability to sordid accidents, as it seems to mean with those writers of the grimly pathetic school who cultivate sympathy to the detriment of comprehension. He does equal justice — joyous justice — to all brighter accidents, — to everything in experience which helps to keep it within the pale of legend. Two of the sportsman's reminiscences are inexpressibly charming, — the chapter in which he spends a warm summer night lying on the grass listening to the small boys who are sent out to watch the horses at pasture, as they sit chattering to each other of hobgoblins and fairies; and the truly beautiful description of a singing-match in a village ale-house, between two ragged serfs. The latter is simply a perfect poem. Very different, but in its way as characteristic, is the story of "A Russian Hamlet," — a poor gentleman whom

the sportsman, staying overnight at a fine house where he has been dining, finds assigned to him as room-mate, and who, lying in bed and staring at him grotesquely over the clothes, relates his lugubrious history. This sketch, more than its companions, strikes the deep moral note which was to reverberate through the author's novels.

The story of "Rudin," which followed soon after, is perhaps the most striking example of his preference for a theme which takes its starting-point in character, — if need be, in morbid character. We have had no recent opportunity to refresh our memory of the tale, but we have not forgotten the fine quality of its interest, — its air of psychological truth, unencumbered with the usual psychological apparatus. The theme is one which would mean little enough to a coarse imagination, — the exhibition of a character peculiarly unrounded, unmoulded, unfinished, inapt for the regular romantic attitudes. Dmitri Rudin is a moral failure, like many of the author's heroes, — one of those fatally complex natures who cost their friends so many pleasures and pains; who might, and yet, evidently, might not, do great things; natures strong in impulse, in talk, in responsive emotion, but weak in will, in action, in the power to feel and do singly. Madame Sand's "Horace" is a broad, free study of this type of person, always so interesting to imaginative and so intolerable to rational people; M. Turgéniew's hero is an elaborate miniature-portrait. Without reading Rudin we should not know just how fine a point he can give to his pencil. But M. Turgéniew, with his incisive psychology, like Madame Sand, with her expansive synthesis, might often be a vain demonstrator and a very dull novelist if he were not so constantly careful to be a dramatist. Everything, with him, takes the dramatic form; he is apparently unable to conceive of anything out of it, he has no recognition of unembodied ideas; an idea, with him, is such and such an individual, with such and such a nose and chin, such and such a hat and waistcoat, bearing the same relation to it as the look of a printed word does to its meaning. Abstract possibilities immediately become, to his vision, concrete situations, as elaborately defined and localized as an interior by Meissonier. In this way, as we read, we are always looking and listening;

and we seem, indeed, at moments, for want of a running thread of explanation, to see rather more than we understand.

It is, however, in "Hélène" that the author's closely commingled realism and idealism have obtained their greatest triumph. The tale is at once a homely chronicle and a miniature epic. The scene, the figures, are as present to us as if we saw them ordered and moving on a lamp-lit stage; and yet, as we recall it, the drama seems all pervaded and colored by the light of the moral world. There are many things in "Hélène," and it is difficult to speak of them in order. It is both so simple and so various, it proceeds with such an earnest tread to its dark termination, and yet it entertains and beguiles us so unceasingly as it goes, that we lose sight of its simple beauty in its confounding, entrancing reality. But we prize it, as we prize all the very best things, according to our meditative after-sense of it. Then we see its lovely unity, melting its brilliant parts into a single harmonious tone. The story is all in the portrait of the heroine, who is a heroine in the literal sense of the word; a young girl of a will so calmly ardent and intense that she needs nothing but opportunity to become one of the figures about whom admiring legend clusters. She is a really elevated conception; and if, as we shall complain, there is bitterness in M. Turgéniew's imagination, there is certainly sweetness as well. It is striking that most of his flights of fancy are in his conceptions of women. With them only, occasionally, does he wholly forswear his irony, and become frankly sympathetic. We hope it is not false ethnology to suppose that this is a sign of something, potentially at least, very fine in the character of his country-women. As fine a poet as you will would hardly have devised a Maria Alexandrowna (in "A Correspondence"), an Hélène, a Lisa, a Tatiana, an Irene even, without having known some very admirable women. These ladies have a marked family likeness, an exquisite something in common which we may perhaps best designate as an absence of frivolous passion. They are addicted to none of those *chatteries* which French romancers consider the "adorable" thing in women. The baleful beauty, in "Smoke," who robs Tatiana of her lover, acts in obedience to an impulse deeper than vulgar coquetry. And yet these fair Muscovites have a

spontaneity, an independence, quite akin to the English ideal of maiden loveliness. Directly, superficially, they only half please. They puzzle us almost too much to charm, and we fully measure their beauty only when they are called upon to act. Then the author imagines them doing the most touching, the most inspiring things.

Hélène's loveliness is all in unswerving action. She passes before us toward her mysterious end with the swift, keen movement of a feathered arrow. She finds her opportunity, as we have called it, in her sympathy with a young Bulgarian patriot, who dreams of rescuing his country from Turkish tyranny; and she surrenders herself to his love and his project with an *abandon* which loses none of its poetry in M. Turgéniew's treatment. She is a supreme example of his taste for "original" young ladies. She would certainly be pronounced *queer* in most quiet circles. She has, indeed, a fascinating oddity of outline; and we never lose a vague sense that the author is presenting her to us with a charmed expectancy of his own, as a travelled friend would show us some quaintly feathered bird, brought from beyond the seas, but whose note he had not yet heard. To appreciate Hélène's oddity, you must read of the orthodoxy of the people who surround her. All about the central episode the story fades away into illimitable irony, as if the author wished to prove that, compared with the deadly seriousness of Hélène and Inssarow, everything else is indeed a mere playing at life. We move among the minor episodes in a kind of atmosphere of sarcasm: now kindly, as where Berseniew and Schubin are dealt with; now unsparingly comical, as in the case of her foolish parents and their tardy bewilderment, — that of loquacious domestic fowls who find themselves responsible for the hatching of an eagle. The whole story is charged with lurking meanings, and to retail them would be as elaborate a task as picking threads out of a piece of fine tapestry. What is Mademoiselle Zoe, for instance, the little German *dame de compagnie*, but a humorous sidelight upon Hélène's intensity, — Mademoiselle Zoe, with the pretty shoulders, and her presence in the universe a sort of mere general rustle of muslin, accompanied, perhaps, by a faint toilet-perfume? There is nothing

finer in all Turgéniew than the whole matter of Berseniew's and Schubin's relation to Hélène. They, too, in their vivid reality, have a symbolic value, as they stand watching the woman they equally love whirled away from them in a current swifter than any force of their own. Schubin, the young sculptor, with his moods and his theories, his exaltations and depressions, his endless talk and his disjointed action, is a deeply ingenious image of the artistic temperament. Yet, after all, he strikes the practical middle key, and solves the problem of life by the definite application of what he *can*. Berseniew, though a less fanciful, is, perhaps, at bottom, a still more poetical figure. He is condemned to inaction, not by his intellectual fastidiousness, but by a conscious, intelligent, intellectual mediocrity, by the dogged loyalty of his judgment. There is something in his history more touching than even in that of Hélène and Inssarow. These two, and Schubin as well, have their consolations. If they are born to suffering, they are born also to rapture. They stand at the open door of passion, and they can sometimes forget. But poor Berseniew, wherever he turns, meets conscience with uplifted finger, saying to him that though Homer may sometimes nod, the sane man never misreasons, and the wise man assents to no mood that is not a working mood. He has not even the satisfaction of lodging a complaint against fate. He is by no means sure that he has one; and when he finds that his love is vain, he translates it into friendship with a patient zeal capable almost of convincing his own soul that it is not a renunciation, but a consummation. Berseniew, Schubin, Zoe, Uwar Iwanowitsch, the indigent house-friend, with his placid depths of unuttered commentary, the pompous egotist of a father, the feeble egotist of a mother, — these people thoroughly animate the little world which surrounds the central couple; and if we wonder how it is that from half a dozen figures we get such a sense of the world's presence and complexity, we perceive the great sagacity of the choice of the types.

We should premise, in speaking of "A Nest of Noblemen" (the English translation bears, we believe, the simple title of "Lisa"), that of the two novels it was the earlier published. It dates from 1858; "Hélène," from 1859. The theme is an

unhappy marriage and an unhappy love. Fedor Iwanowitsch Lawretzky marries a pretty young woman, and after three years of confident bliss finds himself grossly deceived. He separates from his wife, returns from Paris, where his eyes have been unsealed, to Russia, and, in the course of time, retires to his patrimonial estates. Here, after the pain of his wound has ached itself away and the health and strength of life's prime have reaffirmed themselves, he encounters a young girl whom he comes at last to love with the double force of a tender heart that longs to redeem itself from bitterness. He receives news of his wife's death, and immediately presumes upon his freedom to express his passion. The young girl listens, responds, and for a few brief days they are happy. But the report of Madame Lawretzky's death has been, as the newspapers say, premature; she suddenly reappears to remind her husband of his bondage, and to convict Lisa almost of guilt. The pathetic force of the story lies, naturally, in its taking place in a country unfurnished with the modern facilities for divorce. Lisa and Lawretzky of course must part. Madame Lawretzky lives and blooms. Lisa goes into a convent, and her lover, defrauded of happiness, determines at least to try and be useful. He ploughs his fields and instructs his serfs. After the lapse of years he obtains entrance into her convent, and catches a glimpse of her as she passes behind a grating, on her way across the chapel. She knows of his presence, but she does not even look at him; the trembling of her downcast lids alone betrays her sense of it. "What must they both have thought, have felt?" asks the author. "Who can know? who can say? There are moments in life, there are feelings, on which we can only cast a glance without stopping." With an unanswered question his story characteristically closes. The husband, the wife, and the lover, — the wife, the husband, and the woman loved, — these are combinations in which modern fiction has been prolific; but M. Turgéniew's treatment renews the youth of the well-worn fable. He has found its moral interest, if we may make the distinction, deeper than its sentimental one; a pair of lovers accepting adversity seem to him more eloquent than a pair of lovers grasping at happiness. The moral of his tale, as we are free

to gather it, is that there is no effective plotting for happiness, that we must take what we can get, that adversity is a capable mill-stream, and that our ingenuity must go toward making it grind our corn. Certain it is that there is something very exquisite in Lawretzky's history, and that M. Turgéniew has drawn from a theme associated with all manner of uncleanness a story embalmed in a lovely aroma of purity. This purity, indeed, is but a pervasive emanation from the character of Lisaweta Michailowna. American readers of Turgéniew have been struck with certain points of resemblance between American and Russian life. The resemblance is generally superficial; but it does not seem to us altogether fanciful to say that Russian young girls, as represented by Lisa, Tatiana, Maria Alexandrowna, have to our sense a touch of the faintly acrid perfume of the New England temperament, — a hint of Puritan angularity. It is the women and young girls in our author's tales who mainly represent strength of will, — the power to resist, to wait, to attain. Lisa represents it in all that heroic intensity which says so much more to M. Turgéniew's imagination than feline grace. The character conspicuous in the same tale for feline grace — Warwara Pawlowna, Lawretzky's heartless wife — is conspicuous also for her moral flimsiness. In the integrity of Lisa, of Hélène, even of the more dimly shadowed Maria Alexandrowna, — a sort of finer distillation, as it seems, of masculine honor, — there is something almost formidable: the strongest men are less positive in their strength. In the keenly pathetic scene in which Marfa Timofiewna (the most delightful of the elderly maiden aunts of fiction) comes to Lisa in her room and implores her to renounce her project of entering a convent, we feel that there are depths of purpose in the young girl's deferential sweetness which nothing in the world can overcome. She is intensely religious, as she ought to be for psychological truth, and nothing could more effectually disconnect her from the usual *ingénue* of romance than our sense of the naturalness of her religious life. Her love for Lawretzky is a passion in its essence half renunciation. The first use she makes of the influence with him which his own love gives her is to try and reconcile him with his wife; and her foremost feeling, on learning that

the latter is not dead, as they had believed, is an irremissible sense of pollution. The dusky antique consciousness of sin in this tender, virginal soul is a combination which we seem somehow to praise amiss in calling it picturesque, but which it would be still more inexact to call didactic. Lisa is altogether a most remarkable portrait, and one that readers of the heroine's own sex ought to contemplate with some complacency. They have been known to complain on the one hand that romancers abuse them, and on the other that they insufferably patronize them. Here is a picture drawn with all the tenderness of a lover, and yet with an indefinable, an almost unprecedented, *respect*. In this tale, as always with our author, the drama is quite uncommented; the poet never plays chorus; situations speak for themselves. When Lawretzky reads in the *chronique* of a French newspaper that his wife is dead, there is no description of his feelings, no portrayal of his mental attitude. The living, moving narrative has so effectually put us in the way of feeling with him, that we can be depended upon. He had been reading in bed before going to sleep, had taken up the paper and discovered the momentous paragraph. He "threw himself into his clothes," the author simply says, "went out into the garden, and walked up and down till morning in the same alley." We close the book for a moment and pause, with a sense of personal excitement. But of M. Turgéniew's genius for infusing a rich suggestiveness into common forms, the character of Gottlieb Lemm, the melancholy German music-master, is a perhaps surpassing example. Never was homely truth more poetical; never was poetry more minutely veracious.

Lawretzky, sorely tried as he is, is perhaps the happiest of our author's heroes. He suffers great pain, but he has not the intolerable sense of having inflicted it on others. This is the lot, both of the hero of "Smoke" and of the fatally passive youth whose adventures we follow in the author's latest work. On "Smoke" we are unable to linger, as its theme is almost identical with that of "Spring-Torrents," and the latter will be a novelty to a greater number of our readers. "Smoke," with its powerful and painful interest, lacks, to our mind, the underlying sweetness of most of its companions. It has all their

talent, but it has less of their spirit. It treats of a dangerous beauty who robs the loveliest girl in Russia of her plighted lover, and the story duly absorbs us ; but we find that, for our own part, there is always a certain languor in our intellectual acceptance of the grand coquettes of fiction. It is obviously a hard picture to paint ; we always seem to see the lady pushing about her train before the foot-lights, or glancing at the orchestra stalls during her victim's agony. In the portrait of Irene, however, there are very fine intentions, and the reader is charmed forward very much as poor Litwinof was. The figure of Tatiana, however, is full of the wholesome perfume of nature. "Smoke" was preceded by "Fathers and Sons," which dates from ten years ago, and was the first of M. Turgéniew's tales to be translated in America. In none of them is the subject of wider scope or capable of having more of the author's insidious melancholy expressed from it ; for the figures with which he has filled his foreground are, with their personal interests and adventures, but the symbols of the shadowy forces which are fighting forever a larger battle, — the battle of the old and the new, the past and the future, the ideas that arrive with the ideas that linger. Half the tragedies in human history are born of this conflict ; and in all that poets and philosophers tell us of it, the clearest fact is still its perpetual necessity. The opposing forces in M. Turgéniew's novel are an elder and a younger generation ; the drama can indeed never have a more poignant interest than when we see the young world, as it grows to a sense of its strength and its desires, turning to smite the old world which has brought it forth with a mother's tears and a mother's hopes. The young world, in "Fathers and Sons," is the fiercer combatant ; and the old world in fact is simply forever the *victa causa*, which even stoics pity. And yet with M. Turgéniew, characteristically, the gaining cause itself is purely relative, and victors and vanquished are commingled in a common assent to fate. Here, as always, his rare discretion serves him, and rescues him from the danger of exaggerating his representative types. Few figures in his pages are more intelligibly human than Pawel Petrowitsch and Eugene Bazarow, — human each of them in his indefeasible weakness, the one in spite of his small allow-

ances, the other in spite of his brutal claims. In Kirsanow (the farmer) the author has imaged certain things he instinctively values, — the hundred fading traditions of which the now vulgarized idea of the “gentleman” is the epitome. He loves him, of course, as a romancer must, but he has done the most impartial justice to the ridiculous aspect of his position. Bazarow is a so-called “nihilist,” — a red-handed radical, fresh from the shambles of criticism, with Büchner’s *Stoff und Kraft* as a text-book, and everything in nature and history for his prey. He is young, strong, and clever, and strides about, rejoicing in his scepticism, sparing nothing, human or divine, and proposing to have demolished the universe before he runs his course. But he finds there is something stronger, cleverer, longer-lived than himself, and that death is a fiercer nihilist than even Büchner. The tale traces the course of the summer vacation, which he comes to spend in the country with a college friend, and is chiefly occupied with the record of the various trials to which, in this short period, experience subjects his philosophy. They all foreshadow, of course, the supreme dramatic test. He falls in love, and tries to deny his love as he denies everything else, but the best he can do is only to express it in a coarse formula. M. Turgéniew is always fond of contrasts, and he has not failed to give Bazarow a foil in his young comrade, Arcadi Kirsanow, who represents the merely impermanent and imitative element which clings to the skirts of every great movement. Bazarow is silenced by death, but it takes a very small dose of life to silence Arcadi. The latter belongs to the nobility, and Bazarow’s exploits in his tranquil, conventional home are those of a lusty young bull in a cabinet of *rococo china*. Exquisitely imagined is the whole attitude and demeanor of Pawel Petrowitsch, Arcadi’s uncle, and a peculiarly happy invention the duel which this perfumed conservative considers it his manifest duty to fight in behalf of gentlemanly ideas. The deeper interest of the tale, however, begins when the young Büchnerite repairs to his own provincial home, and turns to a pinch of dust the tender superstitions of the poor old parental couple who live only in their pride in their great learned son, and have not even a genteel prejudice, of any consequence, to oppose to his terrible posi-

tivism. M. Turgéniew has written nothing finer than this last half of his story ; every touch is masterly, every detail is eloquent. In Wassili Iwanowitsch and Arina Wlassiewna he has shown us the sentient heart which still may throb in dis-used forms and not be too proud to subsist awhile yet by the charity of science. Their timid devotion to their son, their roundabout caresses, their longings and hopes and fears, and their deeply pathetic stupefaction when it begins to be plain that the world can spare him, all form a picture which, in spite of its dealing with small things in a small style, carries us to the uttermost limits of the tragical. A very noticeable stroke of art, also, is Bazarow's ever-growing discontentment, — a chronic moral irritation, provoked not by the pangs of an old-fashioned conscience, but, naturally enough, by the absence of the agreeable in a world which he has subjected to such exhaustive disintegration. We especially recommend to the reader his long talk with Arcadi as they lie on the grass in the midsummer shade, and Bazarow kicks out viciously at everything propounded by his more ingenuous companion. Toward him too he feels vicious, and we quite understand the impulse, identical with that which in a nervous woman would find expression in a fit of hysterics, through which the overwrought young rationalist, turning to Arcadi with an alarming appearance of real *gusto*, proposes to fight with him, "to the extinction of animal heat." We must find room for the portrait of Arina Wlassiewna : —

She "was a real type of the small Russian gentry of the old *régime* ; she ought to have come into the world two hundred years sooner, in the time of the grand-dukes of Moscow. Easily impressed, deeply pious, she believed in all signs and tokens, divinations, sorceries, dreams ; she believed in the *Iourodivi* [half-witted persons, popularly held sacred], in familiar spirits, in those of the woods, in evil meetings, in the evil eye, in popular cures, in the virtue of salt placed upon the altar on Good Friday, in the impending end of the world ; she believed that if the tapers at the midnight mass in Lent do not go out, the crop of buckwheat will be good, and that mushrooms cease to grow as soon as human eye has rested on them ; she believed that the Devil likes places where there is water, and that all Jews have a blood-spot on their chests ; she was afraid of mice, snakes, toads, sparrows, leeches, thunder, cold water, draughts of air, horses,

goats, red-haired men, and black cats, and considered crickets and dogs as impure creatures ; she ate neither veal, nor pigeons, nor lobsters, nor cheese, nor asparagus, nor hare, nor watermelon (because a melon opened resembled the dissevered head of John the Baptist), and the mere idea of oysters, which she did not know even by sight, caused her to shudder ; she liked to eat well, and fasted rigorously ; she slept ten hours a day, and never went to bed at all if Wassili Iwanowitsch complained of a headache. The only book which she had read was called ‘Alexis, or The Cottage in the Forest’ ; she wrote at most one or two letters a year, and was an excellent judge of sweetmeats and preserves, though she put her own hand to nothing, and, as a general thing, preferred not to move. . . . She was anxious, was perpetually expecting some great misfortune, and began to cry as soon as she remembered anything sad. Women of this kind are beginning to be rare ; God knows whether we should be glad of it.”

The novel which we have chosen as the text of these remarks was published a couple of years since. It strikes us at first as a *réchauffé* of old material, the subject being identical with that of “Smoke,” and very similar to that of the short masterpiece called “A Correspondence.” The subject is one of the saddest in the world, and we shall have to reproach M. Turgéniew with delighting in sadness. But “Spring-Torrents” has a narrative charm which sweetens its bitter waters, and we may add that, from the writer’s point of view, the theme does differ by several shades from that of the tales we have mentioned. These treat of the fatal weakness of will, which M. Turgéniew apparently considers the peculiar vice of the new generation in Russia ; “Spring-Torrents” illustrates, more generally, the element of folly which mingles, in a certain measure, in all youthful spontaneity, and makes us grow to wisdom by the infliction of suffering. The youthful folly of Dmitri Ssanin has been great, the memory of it haunts him for years, and lays on him at last such an icy grip that his heart will break unless he can repair it. The opening sentences of the story indicate the key in which it is pitched. We may quote them as an example of the way in which M. Turgéniew almost invariably appeals at the outset to our distinctively *moral* curiosity, our sympathy with character. Something tells us, in this opening strain, that we are not invited to

lend ear to the mere dead rattle which rises forever from the surface of life : —

“ . . . Toward two o'clock at night, he came back into his sitting-room. The servant who had lighted the candles he sent away, threw himself into a chair by the chimney-piece, and covered his face with his hands. Never had he felt such a weariness of body and soul. He had been spending the whole evening with graceful women, with cultivated men ; some of the women were pretty, almost all the men were distinguished for wit and talent ; he himself had talked with good effect, even brilliantly, and yet, with all this, never had that *tædium vitæ*, of which the Romans already speak, that sense of disgust with life, pressed upon him and taken possession of him in such an irresistible fashion. Had he been somewhat younger, he would have wept for sadness, for *ennui*, and overwrought nerves : a corroding, burning bitterness, like the bitterness of wormwood, filled his whole soul. Something irrefragable — cold, sickening, oppressive — crowded in upon him from all sides like autumn dusk, and he knew not how he could free himself from this duskiness and bitterness. He could not count upon sleep ; he knew he should not sleep. . . . He began to muse, — slowly, sadly, bitterly. . . . He thought of the vanity, the uselessness, the common falsity, of the whole human race. . . . He shook his head, sprang up from his seat, walked several times up and down the room, sat down at his writing-table, pulled out one drawer after the other, and began to fumble among old papers, mostly letters in a woman's hand. He knew not why he did it, — he was looking for nothing, — he simply wished to seek refuge in an outward occupation from the thoughts that tormented him. . . . He got up, went back to the fireplace, sank into his chair again, and covered his face with his hands. . . . ‘Why to-day, just to-day?’ he thought ; and many a memory from the long-vanished past rose up in him. He remembered — this is what he-remembered.”

On his way back to Russia from a foreign tour he meets, at Frankfort, a young girl of modest origin but extraordinary beauty, — the daughter of an Italian confectioner. Accident brings them together, he falls in love with her, holds himself ardently ready to marry her, obtains her mother's consent, and has only, to make the marriage possible, to raise money on his Russian property, which is of moderate value. While he is revolving schemes he encounters an old school-fellow, an odd personage, now married to an heiress who, as fortune has

it, possesses an estate in the neighborhood of Ssanin's own. It occurs to the latter that Madame Polosow may be induced to buy his land, and, as she understands "business" and manages her own affairs, he repairs to Wiesbaden, with leave obtained from his betrothed, to make his proposal. The reader of course foresees the sequel, — the reader, especially, who is practised in Turgéniew. Madame Polosow understands business and much else beside. She is young, lovely, unscrupulous, dangerous, fatal. Ssanin succumbs to the spell, forgets honor, duty, tenderness, prudence, everything, and after three days of bewildered resistance finds himself packed into the lady's travelling-carriage with her other belongings, and rolling toward Paris. But we foresee that he comes speedily to his senses; the spring torrent is spent. The years that follow are as arid as brooding penitence can make them. Penitence, after that night of bitter memories, takes an active shape. He makes a pilgrimage to Frankfort, and seeks for some trace of the poor girl he had deserted. With much trouble he obtains tidings, and learns that she is married in America; that she is happy, and that she serenely forgives him. He returns to St. Petersburg, spends there a short, restless interval, and suddenly disappears. People say he has gone to America. The spring torrents exhale themselves in autumn mists. Ssanin, in the Frankfort episode, is not only very young, but very Russian; how young, how Russian, this charming description tells: —

"He was, to begin with, a really very good-looking fellow. He had a tall, slender figure, agreeable, rather vague features, kindly blue eyes, a fair complexion, suffused with a fresh red, and, above all, that genial, joyous, confiding, upright expression, which at the first glance, perhaps, seems to give an air of limitation, but by which, in former times, you recognized the son of a tranquil aristocratic family, — a son of the "fathers," a good country gentleman born and grown up, stoutly, in those fruitful provinces of ours which border on the steppe; then, a somewhat shuffling gait, a slightly hissing way of speaking, a childlike laugh, as soon as any one looked at him, . . . health, in short, freshness and a softness, — a softness! . . . there you have all Ssanin. Along with this he was by no means dull, and had learnt a good many things. He had remained fresh in spite of

his journey abroad ; those tumultuous impulses which imposed themselves upon the best part of the young men of that day were little known to him."

If we place beside this vivid portrait the sketch, hardly less expressive, of Madame Polosow, we find in the mere apposition the germ of a novel : —

"Not that she was a perfect beauty ; the traces of her plebeian origin were perceptible enough. Her forehead was low, her nose rather thick and inclining to an upward inflection ; she could boast neither of a fine skin nor of pretty hands and feet. But what did all this signify ? Not before the 'sanctity of beauty' — to use Puschkin's words — would he who met her have stood lingering, but before the charm of the powerful half-Russian, half-Bohemian, blooming, womanly body, — and he would not have lingered involuntarily !"

Madame Polosow, though her exploits are related in a short sixty-five pages, is unfolded in the large dramatic manner. We seem to be in her presence, to listen to her provoking, bewildering talk, to feel the danger of her audacious, conscious frankness. Her quite peculiar cruelty and depravity make a large demand on our credulity ; she is perhaps a trifle too picturesquely vicious. But she is strangely, vividly natural, and our imagination goes with her in the same charmed mood as with M. Turgéniew's other evil-doers. Not without an effort, too, do we accept the possibility of Ssanin's immediate infidelity to the object of the pure still passion with which his heart even yet overflows. But these are wonderful mysteries ; its immediacy, perhaps, best accounts for it ; spring torrents, the author would seem to intimate, *must* flow, and ravage their blooming channels. To give a picture of the immeasurable blindness of youth, of its eagerness of desire, its freshness of impression, its mingled rawness and ripeness, the swarming, shifting possibilities of its springtime, and to interfuse his picture with something of the softening poetizing harmony of retrospect, — this has been but half the author's purpose. He has designed beside to paint the natural conflict between soul and sense, and to make the struggle less complex than the one he has described in "Smoke," and less brutal, as it were, than the fatal victory of sense in "A Correspondence." "When

will it all come to an end?" Ssanin asks, as he stares helpless at Maria Nikolaiewna, and feels himself ignobly paralyzed. "Weak men," says the author, "never themselves make an end,—they always wait for the end." Ssanin's history is charged with the moral that salvation lies in being able, at a given moment, to bring one's *will* down like a hammer. If M. Turgéniew pays his tribute to the magic of sense, he leaves us also eloquently reminded that soul in the long run claims her own. He has given us no sweeter image of uncorrupting passion than this figure of Gemma, the frank, young Italian nature blooming in northern air from its own mere wealth of joyousness. Yet, charming as Gemma is, she is but a half-sister of Lisa and Tatiana. Neither Lisa nor Tatiana, we suspect, would have read popular comedy with her enchanting mimicry; but, on the other hand, they would have been withheld by a delicate, indefinable conscientiousness from caricaturing the dismissed lover of the day before for the entertainment of the accepted lover of the present. But Gemma is a charming piece of coloring, and all this only proves how many different ways there are of being the loveliest girl in the world. The accessories of her portrait are as happily rendered; the whole picture of the little Italian household, with its narrow backshop life in the German town, has a mellow enclosed light in which the reader gratefully lingers. It touches the figure of the usual half-fantastic house-friend, the poor old ex-barytone Pantaleone Cippatola, into the most vivacious relief.

III. — We always desire more information about the writers who greatly interest us than we find in their works, and many American readers have probably a friendly curiosity as to the private personality of M. Turgéniew. We are reduced, however, to regretting our own meagre knowledge. We gather from his writings that our author is much of a cosmopolitan, a dweller in many cities, and a frequenter of many societies, and, along with this, an indefinable sense of his being of a so-called "aristocratic" temperament; so that if a man's genius were visible to the eye, like his fleshly integument, that of M. Turgéniew would be observed to have, say, very shapely hands and feet, and a nose expressive of the patrician graces.

A friend of ours, indeed, who has rather an irresponsible fancy, assures us that the author of "Smoke" (which he considers his masterpiece) is, personally, simply his own Pawel Kirsanow. Twenty to one our friend is quite wrong; but we may nevertheless say that, to readers disposed now and then to risk a conjecture, much of the charm of M. Turgéniew's manner resides in this impalpable union of an aristocratic temperament with a democratic intellect. To his inquisitive intellect we owe the various, abundant, human substance of his tales, and to his fastidious temperament their exquisite form. But we must not meddle too freely with causes, when results themselves are so suggestive. The great question as to a poet or a novelist is, How does he feel about life? what, in the last analysis, is his philosophy? When vigorous writers have reached maturity, we are at liberty to gather from their works some expression of a total view of the world they have been so actively observing. This is the most interesting thing their works offer us. Details are interesting in proportion as they contribute to make it clear.

The foremost impression of M. Turgéniew's reader is that he is morbidly serious, that he takes life terribly hard. We move in an atmosphere of unrelieved sadness. We go from one tale to the other in the hope of finding something cheerful, but we only wander into fresh agglomerations of gloom. We try the shorter stories, with a hope of chancing upon something pitched in the traditional key of "light reading," but they strike us alike as so many ingenious condensations of melancholy. "A Village Lear" is worse than "The Ant-char"; "The Forsaken" is hardly an improvement on "A Correspondence"; "The Journal of a Superfluous Man" does little to lay the haunting ghost of "Three Portraits." The author has written several short dramas. Appealing to them to beguile us of our dusky vapors, we find the concentrated tragedy of "The Bread of Charity," and, by way of an after-piece, the lugubrious humor of "The Division." Sad beginnings, worse endings, good people ineffably wretched, happy ones hugely ridiculous, disappointment, despair, madness, suicide, degrading passions, and blighted hopes,—these seem, on first acquaintance, the chief ingredients of M. Turgéniew's version of

the human drama ; and to deepen our sense of its bitterness, we discover the author in the background winding up his dismal demonstration with a chuckle. We set him down forthwith as a cold-blooded pessimist, caring for nothing in life but its misery, and for nothing in misery but its picturesqueness, — its capacity for furnishing cynical epigrams. What is each of the short tales we have mentioned, we ask, but a ruthless epigram, in the dramatic form, upon human happiness ? Ewlampia Charlow, in “ *A Village Lear*,” drives her father to madness and death by her stony depravity, and then joins a set of religious fanatics, among whom she plays a great part as the “ *Holy Mother of God*.” In “ *The Bread of Charity*,” a young heiress brings home to her estates her newly wedded husband, and introduces him to her old neighbors. They dine with him, and one of them, an officious coxcomb, conceives the brilliant idea of entertaining him by an exhibition of a poor old gentleman who has long been hanging about the place as a pensioner of the late parents of the young wife, and is remarkable for a dumb canine attachment to herself. He plies the modest old man with wine, winds him up, and makes him play the fool. But suddenly Kusowkin, through the fumes of his potations, perceives that he is being laughed at, and breaks out into a passionate assurance that, baited and buffeted as he is, he is nothing less than the father of the mistress of the house. She overhears his cry, and though he, horrified at his indiscretion, attempts to retract it, she wins from him a confession of the fact that he had been her mother’s lover. The husband, however, makes him swallow his words, and do public penance. He turns him out of the house with a small pension, and the curtain falls on the compliment offered this fine fellow by the meddlesome neighbor on his generosity : “ *You are a true Russian gentleman !*” The most perfectly epigrammatic of our author’s stories, however, is perhaps that polished little piece of misery, “ *A Correspondence*.” A young man, idle, discontented, and longing for better things, writes, for a pastime, to a young girl whom he has formerly slightly known and greatly esteemed, who has entertained an unsuspected and unrequited passion for him, and who lives obscurely in the country, among very common people. A correspondence

comes of it, in the course of which they exchange confidences and unburden their hearts. The young girl is most pitiable, most amiable, in her sadness, and her friend begins to suspect that she, at last, may give a meaning to his aimless life. She, on her side, is compassionately interested, and we see curiosity and hope throbbing timidly beneath the austere resignation to which she has schooled herself, and the expression of which, mingled with our sense of her blooming beauty of character, makes of Maria Alexandrowna the most nobly fascinating, perhaps, of our author's heroines. Alexis Petrowitsch writes at last that he must see her, that he will come to her, that she is to expect him at such a date, and we imagine tenderly, in the unhastening current of her days, the gentle eddy of her expectation. Her next letter, after an interval, expresses surprise at his non-appearance; her next, several months later, is a last attempt to obtain news of him. The correspondence closes with his confession, written as he lies dying at Dresden. Just as he was starting to join her, he had encountered another woman, a dancing-girl at the opera, with whom he had fallen madly in love. She was low, stupid, heartless; she had nothing to recommend her to anything but his senses. It was ignoble, but so it was. His passion has led him such a life that his health is gone. He has brought on disease of the lungs by waiting for the young lady at the opera-door in the winter nights. Now his hours are numbered, and this is the end of all! And on this lugubrious note the story closes. We read with intent curiosity, for the tale is a masterpiece of narration; but we wonder, in some vexation, what it all means. Is it a piece of irony for irony's sake, or is it a disinterested picture of the struggle between base passion and pure passion? Why, in that case, should it seem a matter of course for the author that base passion should carry the day? Why, as for Rudin, for Ssanin, for the distracted hero of "Smoke," should circumstances also have been too many, as the phrase is, for poor Alexis Petrowitsch? If we pursue our researches, in the hope of finding some method in this promiscuous misery, examples continue to seem more numerous than principles. The author continues everywhere to imply that there is something essentially ridiculous in human

nature, something indefeasibly vain in human effort. We are amazed as we go at the portentous number of his patent fools ; no novelist has drawn a tenth as many. The large majority of his people are the people we laugh at, and a large fraction of the remainder the people we half disgustedly pity. There is little room left, therefore, for the people we esteem, and yet room enough perhaps, considering that our very benevolence is tempered with scepticism. What with the vicious fools and the well-meaning fools, the prosperous charlatans and the grotesque nonentities, the dead failures and the sadder failures that regret and protest and rebel, the demoralized lovers and the jilted maidens, the dusky pall of fatality, in a word, suspended over all human things, it may be inferred that we are not invited to a particularly exhilarating spectacle. Not a single person in the novel of "Fathers and Sons" but has, in some degree, a lurking ironical meaning. Every one is a more or less ludicrous parody on what he ought to have been, or an ineffectual regret over what he might have been. The only person who compasses a reasonable share of happiness is Arcadi, and even his happiness is a thing for strenuous minds to smile at, — a happiness based on the *pot au feu*, the prospect of innumerable babies, and the sacrifice of "views." Arcadi's father is a vulgar failure ; Pawel Petrowitsch is a poetic failure ; Bazarow is a tragic failure ; Anna Sergheiewna misses happiness from an ungenerous fear of sacrificing her luxurious quietude ; the elder Bazarow and his wife seem a couple of ingeniously grotesque manikins, prepared by a melancholy *fantoccinista* to illustrate the mocking vanity of parental hopes. We lay down the book, and we repeat that, with all the charity in the world, it is impossible to pronounce M. Turgéniew anything better than a pessimist.

The judgment is just, but it needs qualifications, and it finds them in a larger look at the author's position. M. Turgéniew strikes us, as we have said, as a man disappointed, for good reasons or for poor ones, in the land which is dear to him. Harsh critics will say, for poor ones, reflecting that a fastidious imagination has not been unconcerned in his discontentment. To the old Muscovite virtues, and especially the old Muscovite *naïveté*, his imagination filially clings, but he finds these things,

especially in the face which his country turns to the outer world, melting more and more every day into the dimness of tradition. The Russians are clever, and clever people are ambitious. Those with whom M. Turgéniew has seen himself surrounded are consumed with the desire to pass for intellectual cosmopolites, to know, or to seem to know, everything that can be known, to be astoundingly modern and progressive and European. Madame Kukshin, the poor little literary lady with a red nose, in "Fathers and Sons," gives up George Sand as "nowhere" for her want of knowledge of embryology, and, when asked why she proposes to remove to Heidelberg, replies with, "Bunsen, you know." The fermentation of social change has thrown to the surface in Russia a deluge of hollow pretensions and vicious presumptions, amid which the love either of old virtues or of new achievements finds very little gratification. It is not simply that people flounder laughably in deeper waters than they can breast, but that in this discord of crude ambitions the integrity of character itself is compromised, and men and women make, morally, a very ugly appearance. The Russian colony at Baden-Baden, depicted in "Smoke," is a collection of more or less inflated profligates. Panschin, in "A Nest of Noblemen," is another example; Sitnikow, in "Fathers and Sons," a still more contemptible one. Driven back, depressed and embittered, into his imagination for the edification which the social spectacle immediately before him refuses him, and shaped by nature to take life hard and linger among its shadows, our observer surrenders himself with a certain reactionary, irresponsible gusto to a shaded portrayal of things. An imaginative preference for dusky subjects is a perfectly legitimate element of the artistic temperament; our own Hawthorne is a signal case of its being innocently exercised; innocently, because with that delightfully unconscious genius it remained imaginative, sportive, inconclusive, to the end. When external circumstances, however, contribute to confirm it, and reality lays her groaning stores of misery at its feet, it will take a rarely elastic genius altogether to elude the charge of being morbid. M. Turgéniew's pessimism seems to us of two sorts, — a spontaneous melancholy and a wanton melancholy. Sometimes, in a sad story, it is the problem, the ques-

tion, the idea, that strikes him; sometimes it is simply the picture. Under the first influences he has produced his masterpieces; we admit that they are intensely sad, but we consent to be moved, as we consent to sit silent in a death-chamber. In the other case he has done but his second best; we strike a bargain over our tears, and insist that when it comes to being simply entertained, wooing and wedding are better than death and burial. "The Antchar," "The Forsaken," "A Superfluous Man," "A Village Lear," "Toc . . . toc . . . toc," all seem to us to be gloomier by several shades than they need have been; for we hold to the good old belief that the presumption, in life, is in favor of the brighter side, and we deem it, in art, an indispensable condition of our interest in a depressed observer that he should have at least tried his best to be cheerful. The truth, we take it, lies for the pathetic in poetry and romance very much where it lies for the "immoral." Morbid pathos is reflective pathos, ingenious pathos, pathos not freshly born of the occasion; noxious immorality is superficial immorality, immorality without natural roots in the subject. We value most the "realists" who have an ideal of delicacy, and the elegiacs who have an ideal of joy.

"Picturesque gloom, possibly," a thick and thin admirer of M. Turgéniew may say to us, "at least you will admit that it *is* picturesque." This we heartily concede, and, recalled to a sense of our author's brilliant diversity and ingenuity, we bring our restrictions to a close. To the broadly generous side of his imagination it is impossible to pay exaggerated homage, or, indeed, for that matter, to its simple intensity and fecundity. No romancer has created a greater number of the figures that breathe and move and speak, in their habits, as they might have lived; none, on the whole, seems to us to have had such a masterly touch in portraiture, none has mingled so much ideal beauty with so much unsparing reality. His sadness has its element of errors, but it has also its larger element of wisdom. Life *is*, in fact, a battle. On this point optimists and pessimists agree. Evil is insolent and strong; beauty, enchanting but rare; goodness, very apt to be weak; folly, very apt to be defiant; wickedness, to carry the day; imbeciles to be in great places, people of sense in small; and mankind,

generally, unhappy. But the world, as it stands, is no illusion, no phantasm, no evil dream of a night ; we wake up to it again for ever and ever ; we can neither forget it, nor deny it, nor dispense with it. We can welcome experience as it comes, and give it what it demands in exchange for something which it is idle to pause to call much or little, so long as it contributes to swell the volume of consciousness. In this there is mingled pain and delight, but over the mysterious mixture there hovers a visible rule, which bids us learn to will and seek to understand. So much as this we seem to decipher between the lines of M. Turgéniew's minutely written chronicle. He himself has sought to understand as zealously as his most eminent competitors. He gives, at least, no meagre account of life, and he has done liberal justice to its infinite variety. This is his great merit ; his great defect, roughly stated, is a tendency to the abuse of irony. He remains, nevertheless, to our sense, a very welcome mediator between the world and our curiosity. If we had space, we should like to set forth that he is by no means our ideal story-teller, — this honorable genius possessing, attributively, a rarer skill than the finest required for producing an artful *réchauffé* of the actual. But even for better romancers we must wait for a better world. Whether the world in its highest state of perfection will occasionally offer color to scandal, we hesitate to pronounce ; but we are prone to conceive of the ultimate novelist as a personage altogether purged of sarcasm. The imaginative force now expended in this direction, he will devote to describing cities of gold and heavens of sapphire. But, for the present, we gratefully accept M. Turgéniew, and reflect that his manner suits the most moods of the most readers. If he were a dogmatic optimist, we suspect that, as things go, we should long ago have ceased to miss him from our library. The personal optimism of most of us no romancer can confirm or dissipate, and our personal troubles, generally, place fictions of all kinds in an impertinent light. To our usual working mood the world is apt to seem M. Turgéniew's hard world, and when, at moments, the strain and the pressure deepen, the ironical element figures not a little in our form of address to those short-sighted friends who have whispered that it is an easy one.

HENRY JAMES, JR.